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SERMON CCCLX.

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ABANDONMENT OF GOD DEPRECATED BY THE AGED.

"Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth."—
Ps. lxxi. 9.

✓ Age is the winter of life. The activity, buoyancy, and hopes of youth are past. The energies of mature years have wasted away and are no more. Bright prospective scenes, on earth at least, are remembered—not anticipated. The associations of the aged are with past generations; with the present they have few things in common. In the midst of the busy multitude, they dwell alone; they are perpetually receding from earth's busy scenes, and are liable to be forgotten. They have need again of that tender, fostering care, once shown them, and which they in their turn have extended to others. How desirable and important is the presence and favor of God! How full of meaning, breathed by them, is the petition in the text, as they lift their dimmed vision to the everlasting hills, and their heavy ear waits to catch the responsive accents of divine love. They are fading—still fading. The generation that once stood thick as summer leaves, are now so few, that "a child may write them." "Our fathers where are they?" One by one we carry them forth from our dwellings to the place of sepulchre; nor are they missed, except by the surviving few who have grown old with them, or have been the companions of their declining years. So disconnected have they become with the associations of the multitude, their quiet exit scarcely raises a ripple upon the sea of life. And this fact shows that they are liable to be too much neglected while living. Few consider the peculiar circumstances and necessities—few sympathize with the trials of the aged. The pulpit, doubtless, speaks less frequently than it should—both to them and for them—thus "turning the hearts of the children to the fathers." I would not have it reckoned among the deficiencies of my ministry, that

the aged had no place in my sympathies, labors, and prayers. Such neglect the genius of the gospel forbids. It is written, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God." And situated as are the aged, in the providence of God, they are entitled to our liveliest sympathies, our most sedulous attention. And it should quicken and also make us patient in the discharge of our duties to them, when we remember that we cannot have them long—and that some of us may have need in our turn, of the kindness and attention which it is our duty and privilege to show. The text gives as our present subject,

ABANDONMENT OF GOD DEPRECATED BY THE AGED.

I. They are peculiarly helpless. Infancy is helpless, but its wants are comparatively few; and if they "grow with the growth" there is generally a corresponding ability to redress them. With age, the reverse is true. Past habits, feelings, pursuits and enjoyments, have created necessities unknown to infancy and which are inseparable from age, while the ability to redress them is constantly diminishing. And not only so, but this feeling of growing helplessness, is to the aged, a painful one, contrasted with past comparative independence. Consequently, many a want is never made known, and also, many that are, from a variety of causes, are never redressed. They therefore suffer rather than complain, and evince in silence, genuine heroism, which, because it is not known, or not appreciated, is not admired or commended. God only knows how much they suffer from their helplessness, how much patience is exercised by them, the reward of which, if they are the children of the Most High, they will surely reap in another world. Unwilling to be burdensome, they are uncomplaining sufferers; and their wants should therefore, if possible, be anticipated and promptly redressed, even though numerous and frequently recurring. And if human hearts fail to sympathize, or grow weary, or are engrossed, as they may be with other cares, how much more necessary, important and desirable are divine compassions—the communications and consolations of infinite love, always sympathetic, unwearied and inexhaustible! Experiencing, or even anticipating this state of dependence and comparative helplessness and its trials, how natural, appropriate, and expressive is the prayer,—“Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth.”

II. Life, with the aged, is peculiarly void of earthly interest and enjoyment. Cut off from active pursuits, and from the nature of the case, forbidden in the "sere leaf" of life the anticipation of any thing novel or untasted; their thoughts, their conversation, are naturally respecting things long since past. There, in the distance, sometimes in another and distant land, is the place of their birth, the scene of their first intellectual apprehensions, their first hopes and joys. There, too, at successive and not unfrequent intervals, are the wrecks of their exploded schemes of pleasure, honor and wealth. And as they muse, there

are vivid remembrances of many early friends—now no more—their own precursors to the silent tomb. Their own generation have almost all of them gone to their graves. Here and there a survivor—the relic of other days—a cotemporary witness of the swift lapse and ravages of time, serves to assure them of the reality of their desolations and their growing nearness to eternity. Sometimes not one of all those once known, once loved, remains, with whom in conversation to revive recollections, and thus in thought become once more the busy actors in the drama of life. In present passing, and sometimes even exciting scenes, they take no share, feel little or no interest. The busy whirl of pleasures, cares and toils, seems undesirable, now that their tread is feeble and trembling, and their once strong arm is powerless. "They are afraid of that which is high, and fears are in the way." New voices, faces, plans, new methods of business, new forms of thought, reveal a world about them with which they have scarcely a single association. They are witnesses of changes, scarcely perceptible in progress, but which in their full and concurrent development are greater than can well be conceived, except by those whose protracted existence links the past to the present. And when, during their musings, these and similar considerations throng the mind of dependent, contemplative age, there is experienced an inexpressible loneliness and desolation of soul. The silent lapse of each day separates them further and further still, from all that constituted the zenith of their earthly ambition and joy. The world has gradually receded and time is constantly blotting out the remembrances of the past. Thus the present is perpetually becoming a more perfect blank. The stricken heart sighs and sighs again, nor touches a responsive chord. Some few, perhaps, whom afflictions have schooled into sympathy, their sensitive natures covered with scars from wounds inflicted by an unfeeling and heartless world—victims even to man's tender mercies—may, and do have some sympathy with the aged; having become old before their time, alike and yet unlike, they are enabled from time to time to shed a ray of light into the thick and yet gathering gloom. All this, and more even, being true, how desirable to the aged must be the presence of the Father of spirits, the light of his countenance and the joy of his salvation! The appeal in the text is to the compassion of Jehovah; "Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth."

III. Bodily infirmities add to the peculiar trials of age. It is doubtless, as a general thing, a mercy that the eye grows dim, and the ear heavy. These senses, the source of much enjoyment under other circumstances, in their diminished perfection correspond more nearly with the diminished powers of bodily and mental endurance. As inlets to the soul, when partially closed they prevent the introduction of much that would only disturb peace of mind and hasten decay. There is much, very much, in this world, in respect to which it is very desirable to be both deaf and blind. To thought, sobered and matured by age and experience, the present, every way considered, seem to be

days of strange degeneracy. Solitary and pensive musings give a peculiar coloring to the intelligence that reaches them, and increase their temptations and liabilities to presage evil. The very elements seem changed in their nature. The breath of spring, the heat of summer and the frosts of winter—food, sleep, are not what they were. Memory is more and more unfaithful to its trust. The mind swings from its balance. Unreal things are imagined, and these most frequently of a painful kind. Real things seem strangely out of place in fitness or order of time through forgetfulness. Past habits of business persuade the necessity of present effort and diligence, even where there is no need of a single anxious care. Not unfrequently there are apprehensions of want, and of cruel neglect. Existence at times seems an intolerable burden. Her powers diminished, nature bends under the weight of years, and seems to ask imploringly for the undisturbed rest and quiet of the grave. How timely, precious and consolatory, under these circumstances, must be assurances from God of renewed youth, vigor, and service in another life and a better world.

IV. Their nearness to eternity makes the presence and favor of God eminently desirable to the aged. The race of life is almost run. The sun of a lengthened and weary day is well nigh ready to set. The lamp of life burns dim and is just ready to expire. The day of grace, the season of probation is also well nigh passed. Sabbaths, sermons and prayers will soon be no more. Death is at hand—"the judge standeth at the door." Eternity with all its boundlessness of glory and shame, joy and wo, life and death, awaits the immortal spirit. At such an hour, and in these circumstances, how painful it must be to an individual to feel that God has left him, and when human sympathy and aid avail so little. If the soul ever knew the blessedness of peace and communion with God, and had learned in the confidence of faith to cast all its care upon him, what strong desires would naturally wing to heaven the prayer contained in the text? And it may be regarded as evidence of having been born from above, when, on the verge of probation and eternity, the soul turns constantly and confidently to God as the chief, the only unfailing source of good—when notwithstanding much infirmity and doubt, faith still clings to and pleads the fulfilment of the divine promise: "Even to good old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear, even I will carry and deliver you." An earthly father's presence and love, could offer to helpless infancy no such assurances of favor, protection, and support as this promise extends to the believing soul,—thereby putting "underneath the everlasting arms." Thus effectually provided for—age with all its loneliness, dependence, infirmities, and nearness to eternity,—is not altogether an undesirable, and in some respects, may be regarded as an enviable condition. But the presence and favor of God is every thing; and without it, age is an object for heartfelt compassion, the tenderest commiseration—"having no hope and without God in the world,"—here at this point where there is the gradual setting in of "a night that knows no morn." Impenitent and unsancti-

fied age bespeaks christian solicitude and fervent prayer ; because of their nearness to the judgment—the exceeding brevity of the remaining space for repentance, together with the accumulated difficulties of delayed repentance. On the other hand, with the mature, the ripe christian, rich in satisfying experience of God's grace and faithfulness, "when trembling on life's utmost verge," we can hardly refrain from the wish to exchange places ; we are ready to say, "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his." Such are some of the considerations why age deprecates abandonment by Him whose "favor is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life itself."

The aged have also their peculiar and solemn responsibilities.

1. They should seek a confirmed assurance of reconciliation and peace with God. The Saviour himself has said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The characteristics of this "new birth" are genuine, unfeigned sorrow for sin, as "an evil and bitter thing," loathing it, and ourselves on account of it—a deep and abiding sense of our ill deserts, as transgressors of the holy law of God, a hope of salvation by grace through faith in Christ crucified, "Who gave himself for our sins, and was raised again for our justification ;" who is able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, who never yet did, and who never will cast away any that penitently seek him, since he saves most freely the chief of sinners, and by "his blood cleanseth from all sin ;" who helps by his all-sufficient grace all that come lowly as did the publican and the prodigal ; who is "made of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, to all who can say, "In my hand no price I bring ; Simply to thy cross I cling." As a consequence of this hope, there is a predominant, all pervading desire, as the only possible return for "love so amazing, so divine," to live solely and forever to the Redeemer—to commend and praise the grace which draws, receives, and rescues from hell even at "the eleventh hour," the chastened, humbled and believing soul. An assurance of having experienced this change of heart arises from an advance in the strength and sincerity of the feelings alluded to, taken in connexion with a class of moral exercises denominated the "fruit of the Spirit ;" love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. As it is written, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." There is also, "the witness of the Spirit with our spirits, that we are the children of God ;" known chiefly by its influence in giving clearness to our spiritual vision, strength to our faith, ardor to our love, richness to our consolations, and confidence in anticipation of the judgment. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before him." The aged should diligently and prayerfully look for this evidence of their soul's renovation and sanctification, at the same time giving all diligence that they may be found of him in peace, by growing "in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

2. The aged should be patient and faithful unto the end. "Yet a little while and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." But during this brief period, the aged "have need of patience." The preceding imperfect sketch, which has been given of the trials of age is no picture of the imagination. It hints at sober, solemn realities; so painfully and truly such, that many have been led in consequence of them, to prefer death to life. Ye, whose heads are frosted with age, whose strength withers daily at the touch of time, "*ye have need of patience.*" Be aware of your temptations, your easily besetting sins. Labor and pray that you may submit yourselves meekly to your trials, numerous and painful though they may be, and thus glory in your infirmities. Comfort and sustain your hearts with those consolations which God has made ready to your hands in the gospel of his Son: "casting all your care on Him for he careth for you." Be assured there are those who sympathize with you in your trials, and sorrows, and who have you in daily remembrance at the mercy seat.

Be faithful also unto death. It is not yet time to rest. All danger is not yet past. Let the weapons of spiritual warfare be kept bright. Maintain a close walk with God. If thy once firm step now falters—though on account of your trials, you are sometimes tempted to say with the patriarch Jacob, "all these things are against me,"—still keep your course to the goal and "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Lose not the reward of past sufferings and toil through present unfaithfulness and neglect. Spend much of your remaining time on earth in communion with God and in meditation upon his word. Imitate the Psalmist whose devotional writings have instructed your worship, and affected your hearts. "Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray and cry aloud." "Seven times in a day do I praise thee." If indeed you are the Lord's, you now go to his word, to his house, to the family altar and closet, to secure to your souls a perfected preparation for glory. Consider how much occasion you have for gratitude and praise. Through many years, you have been the object of God's tender care, and during all those years you have been daily loaded with his benefits. "The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness; and as you wear it, keep your eye constantly upon that one which God has in reversion for those that endure unto the end, and which cannot fade away.

3. Seek to be useful still to others. It is written, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing to show that the Lord is upright." Say with David, "O God thou hast taught me from my youth and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also that I am old and grey-headed, forsake me not, until I have showed thy strength to this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." "Age should speak, and the multitude of years should teach wisdom."

The patient, cheerful, active piety of the aged, may and does, speak impressively to the hearts of the young. Give them the valuable lessons which your long, and in many instances bitter experience has taught you. Let the bud and the opening flower in them, mature and perfect themselves amid the clusters of your ripe fruit, while they witness the power of religion to sustain and cheer you, the peace thereby of your last hours, and your triumphant ascent to glory. So shall your descending mantles fall upon young Elishas and Samuels, who shall rise up and call you blessed. Age has its advantages for moral purposes; and grey hairs may sow seed that shall spring and bear fruit unto everlasting life, long after they themselves have been hid in the grave. "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." And better than marble monuments—than "storied urn or animated bust," is the grateful remembrance, and more useful lives and example of those whom we have mediately blessed. It is for this, God lengthens out existence, and to the humblest effort, when made from a sincere desire to glorify him, he will add his blessing. And useful to the last, earthly existence will sweetly lapse into the life and service of heaven.

Pious age has also its consolations.

1. The wearisome, dangerous part of existence is well nigh finished forever. A few more conflicts and toils—a few more sighs and tears, disappointments and pains, and then comes the blessed, blissful moment that separates from infirmities and grief, from troubled thoughts and fears, from sin and sorrow forever; a moment, which, while it separates from all evil, unites also to all good, and puts the weary, way-worn pilgrim in possession of the long sought rest of heaven—the heir of God in everlasting possession of the heavenly inheritance. Yes! the glorious goal is in view. "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed." A few more rising and setting suns, and time with you is no more. A few more pulsations, and thy heart, even thine, shall be still. How very near heaven may be—nay, how near it is! How soon it may—it will be possessed! Aged pilgrim, seest thou not in yon horizon the glimmering dawn of thine eternal day? Look up from earth, for see! "the morning cometh." Had ever the voice of God such distinctness? the heavenly song such sweetness? Seemed heaven ever so desirable before? thy God ever so near as now, when in the closet thy softest whisper reaches his ear? Panted thy spirit ever before with such strong desires "to depart and be with Christ?" while thy inmost soul turns imploringly to heaven with the prayer, "Even so come Lord Jesus, come quickly." The wing of cherub and seraph seem to waft celestial fragrance from the groves of paradise to animate and allure thee thither. These last days are then, thy best days, and best because the last. Thou wouldst not go back. Thou canst not, nay, wouldst not stand still. How cheering, consoling the thought, thou art so near thine eternal home!

2. Pious age has a rich experience of God's grace. Said one, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God—how great is

the sum of them ! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I awake I am still with thee." Perhaps the dew of heaven refreshed thy youth, and thou wast early satisfied with God's mercy. How long then, has thy God watched over thee ? Against how many temptations has he fortified thee ? and from how many perils has he rescued thee ? In times of darkness, how often has he been thy light ? Under what a load of care, and in the midst of how many and how deep trials he has sustained thee ! Who can so speak of divine patience, faithfulness, tenderness, compassion, and mercy as thou ? And if the review of thy life abases thee, does it not also magnify to thy soul's apprehension, God's rich grace ? And this rich experience is the earnest, the pledge of ultimate fulness of joy. "The Lord will give grace and glory." In an assured hope of heaven, thou mayest cheerfully and confidently "wait all the days of thy appointed time, till thy change come." It is an "appointed time," and must therefore end—end soon. It is a change, not annihilation : a change and a glorious one, too, for thee. Thus, for thee, strong in faith, there are views of the promised land, like those granted to Moses from the top of Pisgah. The very "bitterness of death" seems to be past—the gloom that hung round the grave is fled. It now offers a safe, desirable, temporary lodgment for thy dust, and a convoy of ministering angels are ready to bear thee in triumph to glory. Or if thy heavenly Father sees it best yet a little while to prolong thy pilgrimage, remember the promise which is "yea and amen"—"As thy day is, so shall thy strength be," "Behold I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God : and I will write upon him my new name."

In conclusion of the subject, I remark, that we are hereby solemnly admonished of our duty to the aged. God has seen fit in his wise and gracious providence, to spare to us these relics of former generations. They are in the midst of us—in your families. Some of them are parents who have done so much for you, and to whom from you, much, very much is due in return. For their toil, their counsels, their example, their prayers, are you their debtors ! Soon they must go the way of all the earth. Yet a little while and they shall not be. You will miss them from their retired walks, from your tables, and from their quiet rooms. The sculptured stone will mark their silent resting place, and as the seasons alternate, the wintry blasts will sigh their requiem, or the green grass wave over their graves. The remembrance of kindness shown to them, will be grateful to your hearts when they are no more. Their dependence, infirmities, their temporal necessities and spiritual interests, bespeak the manifestation towards them of a noble, self-sacrificing, filial piety. Let your intercourse with them be characterized by great respect, patience and tenderness, remembering that the cup which you put into their hands, your children may mete out to

you. And if they are christians, who can tell what blessings may descend and rest upon you and yours in answer to their prayers, when they shall be with God? Anticipate their wants—relieve, if possible, their necessities, and tenderly guard their second childhood, as they did you, when first your steps commenced threading the mazes of this mortal life. Especially, if in any case the aged are strangers to the consolations of religion, commend to them the gospel of God. Bear them on your hearts in prayer in the closet, at the family altar, and in the place of social prayer. It may be God will give them repentance unto life even at the eleventh hour. It may be they feel even now their need of mercy—are ready to ask, “What shall I do to be saved?”—that they would fain hope there is mercy for them, and yet are ready to despair of heaven. Thus they balance between hope and fear, life and death, heaven and hell. They have need of your most assiduous christian care. In the spirit of Him who will not “break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax,” assure them that “with God all things are possible,” who so magnifies his grace, though contrary to nature and providence, that a man is sometimes “born when he is old.” And the hope of success may encourage them to seek the Lord, and find, and so live forever. And the conversion of one, may give rise to a train of influences that shall be as life from the dead in respect to others. And these aged ones, at length all gathered into the fold of Christ, shall be found in him, and numbered with the redeemed of God, in addition to that goodly number of pious ancestors now in glory—where may God in his rich mercy and grace bring them and us, when we shall have each fulfilled as an hireling our days, and faithfully served God in our generation. Amen.

SERMON CCCLXI.

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THE WHOLE FAMILY OF CHRIST.

“Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”—Eph. chap. 3, verse 15.

This is one of the incidental remarks with which the word of God abounds, conveying to our minds more instruction, than it was the direct purpose of the sacred writers to communicate. Such hints, casually thrown out as it may appear to us, though all is under the direction of the spirit of inspiration, are exceedingly interesting, and the arguments which are thus furnished in support of doctrines, are exceedingly weighty.

The apostle in the context is assuring the Ephesian christians that he remembers them in his prayers before God. “For this cause,” says he, “I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,”—this is merely the introduction to what he designs to say;—he proceeds to set before them the purport of his prayer,—“that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his spirit in the inner man;”—but let us now stop at the introduction: in it there is set forth a most interesting truth, upon which it may be profitable to dwell.

The Church of Christ, in heaven and on earth, constitutes one great family.

The religion of Jesus Christ has instituted new relationships among mankind. It has connected Christians with heaven even while they remain on earth. It has made, in the highest sense, God their father, Jesus Christ their elder brother, and all the company of the glorified saints their kindred in the skies,—while at the same time, it has bound them by ties stronger than household love, to people of every nation and tongue under the whole heaven, among whom the love of Jesus has been shed abroad with its redeeming power. Some of us belong to this great family; and as when a circle is formed in their father's

house, of a portion of the members of a family widely scattered, the conversation must relate in part to those who are still absent, but who bear the endearing name of brother or sister, so, as we have come up to-day, from various parts of the land, to this house of our common father,—as we are enjoying the common blessings of his presence, and these exalted privileges of his grace, let us regard the nature of this relationship, the extent of the family circle and the condition of the absent ones, and seek to feel and to cherish those emotions in our own souls, which must arise from such communion with each other and with God.

I. The relation of Christians to each other is a *family relation*. The term which is employed in the text to represent it is derived from the word, *father*. It thus declares that the Church is a family in this sense, that its members have all the same father. This is true indeed of all the children of men by creation. Have we not all one father? But the wicked have denied and broken up this relationship, and now are to be considered not as united to God by this tender tie, but as condemned criminally in the presence of their Judge. The disciples of Christ, however guilty they may have been—however long they have wandered as prodigals from their father's house, have come back—have listened to the call of mercy from their gracious God, and have received as a free gift the pardon of their sins, which secures the salvation of their souls. They have received as the first-fruits of their reconciliation with God, adoption into his family, and the spirit of adoption also, whereby they cry, with child-like confidence and love, Abba, Father. There may have been many different circumstances connected with their conversion; they may have been awakened by various instrumentalities; they may have come into the kingdom of the Redeemer at different periods; their words of penitence and faith may have been in various languages,—but whether the "God be merciful to me a sinner" was uttered in the polished tones of a Castilian, or the rough breathings of a Hottentot, it has been heard in heaven, and the penitent has become a child of God.

This is recognized as a *family* relationship in the word of God. "I will be a father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord." "Whosoever," says Christ, "shall do the will of my father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." The spirit of obedience unto God is the distinctive mark of a real Christian, and this binds him to Christ in these endearing relations. The union with Christ which is thus formed is represented by the most significant language. It is the union of the branch with the vine,—of the husband with the wife,—of the members with the body. Such is the measure of the Savior's love for those whom he has redeemed that he permits the use of such terms to express it. Surely then those who are thus joined to Christ are related to each other, as brothers and sisters. In the Scriptures the word "brethren" is frequently employed to denote the relationship existing among the children of God. It is once used in connection with the statement of a

duty, growing out of this relationship, which is startling. "We," says the Apostle, "ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." And he uses the same word in bringing to view a test of Christian character—"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."

This relationship has ever been recognized among the disciples of Christ. One of the common expressions among the ancient saints in speaking of each other was, *brethren*;—and in later times, even down to the present day, *brother*, and *sister*, are the affectionate terms by which those address each other who are united in Christian love. Every departure from the spirit of ardent affection, all neglect of brotherly regard and sympathy is seen and felt to be unworthy of a follower of Christ. Love to God the Father, love to Christ the Savior, and not least in importance, love to the children of God wherever they may be found, is an essential element of Christian character; and this burning in purity and power in each Christian's heart, makes his union with his fellow Christians delightful and profitable, and gives to all, thus united, the character of a happy family.

There is another point presented to view in the text which exhibits the nature of this relationship. "Of whom, the whole family in heaven and earth is named,"—all have received a name from Jesus Christ. Each one has this proof of connection with the great family, that he bears its name. We know what this name is on earth. It is *Christian*. "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." Before and in other places they had received different names; generally opprobrious and insulting epithets. But at Antioch, and at all other places, since the apostolic age, they have been called Christians, from the great founder of their religion. And this is their common name all over the earth. The other words in which grace and mercy are made known to men are translated into the languages and dialects of all who hear the gospel. But this word, the distinctive name of God's people, is not changed. It is the same word, though written in the various characters of almost all the languages of the earth; it has the same sound in all, as nearly as the different tongues will admit. Have we not reason to suppose that this is the very name of the redeemed ones above—that this word is not translated even into the dialect of heaven—that *Christ* is the name, at which every knee shall bow even in eternity, and *Christian* the name of the family on high.

II. Let us regard the extent of this family, and the condition of those who are absent from us.

A portion, as we are taught by the text, are in heaven. Yes—there is the Father, and the first-born at his right hand, upon their glorious thrones, and around them are gathered those which have been saved from among men, and washed in the blood of Christ. These are called the Saints. These have been our fellow men,—some of them our particular friends and kindred. They have once been subject to all the infirmities of our human nature. They have sinned and suffered—they have sickened and died. The ties by which we were

bound to them on earth were broken, and we seemed to be bidding them farewell for ever, as we wiped the death-dew from their brow and closed their eyes in darkness,—as we placed them in the grave and left them to its silence. But these have not perished,—these if they have died in the Lord have joined that portion of the family which is on high. Yonder—not far off—much nearer than we sometimes suppose, are these glorified spirits, the family in heaven. Look upon the scene, as described by one who saw it in vision. There is a great multitude, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands. Hear their cry, as with loud voice they say, “Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” See, all the angels around the throne are falling upon their faces worshipping God, as they join in the song, and say, “Amen: Blessing, and glory, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God, for ever and ever, Amen.” Do you ask, “what are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?” A heavenly voice answers, “these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Here they are in the presence of God, perfectly holy, perfectly happy, and they shall go no more out for ever. This is the condition of that portion of the family already in heaven. Who of us has not contributed to make it up? Have you given up an aged father or mother, who has been cut down as a shock of corn fully ripe—whose spirit has been cheerfully resigned into the arms of Jesus at the bidding of death? See amid the worshipping throng is that revered parent, now arrayed in immortal youth, and striking with vigorous hands the harp of praise. This is your father, your mother still. Has the mourning wife, or husband committed to the grave the cold body of the one most beloved on earth?—one who could say amid the bitterness of such a separation, “I have a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better.” See that dear friend is clothed in white before the throne, and is joining in the anthems of heaven. Do you grieve to know that the cherished object of your earthly affection is in such company and enjoying such bliss? You may love still—for however remote heaven may be from earth, yet these are a portion of the same family to which you belong. Have you children in heaven? Have you been called to give up those who in their tender years were consecrated to Christ? whose early affection was fixed upon the Savior of sinners? These precious spirits are in heaven, ripening for immortal joy. Mother! the laughing babe which has been called from your embrace before it could comprehend the

power and warmth of your affection, has not lived in vain ; Baptized with the blood of Jesus, it has been admitted to heaven ; and while you are shedding bitter tears amid the sin and misery of earth, it is raising its infant voice in the chorus of the skies ;—nursed by older saints, reposing in the bosom of its Savior, it shall be forever safe and happy. It has not been cast out from the care of the family,—before you placed its cold clay in the dust, angels had borne its glowing spirit to its home in heaven. Is it not happiness amid our wo, to have such assurances as these from the word of God ? Is it not honor to be connected with such spirits in the brighter world ?

Nor are these unwilling to acknowledge the relationship. If ever the exalted might look down with contempt upon those who are beneath them and deny all acquaintance with them, surely these who are in heaven may forget and neglect their brethren of the earth. But so it is not. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Think you they come not most willingly, on such an errand, to those with whom they have dwelt in love on earth, and from whom they are separated only for a little time ?

This is the family in heaven—already numerous. In it are all the holy men that have lived and died ; the patriarchs, and their pious children ; the leaders of Israel, and the faithful of the people ; all the godly kings of antiquity, and those of their subjects who worshipped Jehovah ; the prophets, and those who listened with believing hearts to their prophecies ; the good of all ages and countries, who have depended upon the merits of a crucified Savior for salvation, whether they looked forward to him through the types and ceremonies of the Jewish ritual, or back to Calvary, to behold in Jesus of Nazareth the Lamb slain for sin, from the foundation of the world. There are the martyrs who have defended the faith, and sealed their confession with their blood ; the pilgrims who have preferred "freedom to worship God" to every other blessing ; the heralds of the cross to the ends of the earth, each with his company of redeemed ones from the north, the south, the east and the west, the first-fruits of missionary labor, already harvested, gathered safely into the garner of God. This is the family in heaven ; a portion of the great family which is named from Christ. How numerous it is we cannot tell. What it shall at length be, when all are gathered home, we are told ;—"an exceeding great multitude which no man can number." It will be large enough to fill the desires of the benevolent heart of Jesus. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

But as yet a multitude of the redeemed are left on earth. To these we turn—the *family on earth*. Do we ask, who are they ? Is not the whole human race one great family ? "Hath not God made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth ?" Can we ever be insensible to the ties which bind us to the whole human family ? Yet the relationship which christianity originates, is higher than this natural connection of man with his fellows. The

christian must not, and will not overlook the one, but by the other he is most sacredly bound. The family of Christ, alas, is not as extensive as the family of man. It should be. He who rules in heaven has a just claim to the affection and service of every creature below. But his particular family is that portion of mankind, which, in accordance with the claims of the gospel, has submitted to his authority. To speak more particularly, those individuals of the human race, who have been led, by the teaching of the gospel and of the spirit of God, to see and feel their own sinfulness and ruin, and to receive Jesus Christ in penitence and faith as their only Saviour, trusting alone to the efficacy of his precious blood for salvation,—these, all these, and only these belong to the family of Christ on earth. There are others indeed on earth who sustain a peculiar relationship to this great family,—Christ has his chosen ones among men, who may yet be living in impenitency and sin, but who shall assuredly be brought into the Kingdom of the Redeemer. These are *members elect*. We cannot know them at present, but Christ who has purchased their souls with his blood knows them—their names are graven upon his hands; the spirit knows them, and in the appointed time will certainly introduce them into the bosom of the family on earth. This family embraces all the invisible Church of Christ still on earth. It may be more or less extensive, in any particular locality, the visible Church. It may not include some who make profession of love to God, and who have taken the vows of consecration upon them, and thus became attached to the outward fold of Christ; it may include some, who from various reasons have made no public profession of faith; but it does embrace all those, and only those who have been born of the spirit, and who are sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption. Each contrite, humble disciple of Christ is a member of this family.

Where then should we look for such? Are they all gathered within the limits of one country? Are they all to be found within the pale of our sect? Believe it not. Some may say, doth not wisdom dwell with us?—is there not safety alone with us? The Jew may consider himself the only favorite of God, and in turn the former Gentile may anathematize the outcast Jew; but the universal Church,—the company of true disciples,—the christian family has the *whole earth* for its dwelling-place. Each one must be renewed of the Holy Ghost, must be united to Christ by a living faith, by which the merits of Christ shall be made to secure his pardon and salvation, and then he is a member of the invisible Church—of this family of Christ. And out of this, there can be no salvation. That is, regeneration and repentance and faith, by which man becomes a member of the invisible Church, are essential to salvation, and nothing else can be. It is of course the duty of each renewed and penitent sinner to make profession of his faith in Christ before the world, and join those who are organized as the visible Church of Christ, in their efforts to promote the glory of the Redeemer: but little confidence can be placed in his avowed change of heart, if he does not seek to do this; yet if he fail to do it through

inability,—if like the penitent thief he has no time to unite with the Church on earth, he shall yet, if truly penitent, be received into the Church above. Away with that exclusiveness which would shut out a devout christian from our warmest christian love, because he has not our own distinctive name—a name which is perpetuated only to keep in mind the departure of the disciples of Christ, from the unity and purity and love of the Apostolic Church. God forbid, that any part of the disciples of Christ should seek to make any other name more prominent, than that by which the whole family, in heaven and earth is named. Let us, my brethréen, cultivate that spirit which will allow us to look among all denominations of christians for our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. If only a heart is found beating with love to Christ, let us respond to that heart in love,—such an one belongs to the family of Christ.

And are not such found among christians of every different sect. If the Bible is received as the word of God—if the threatenings of God's word are received as truth and as fully believed as its promises,—among the votaries of any religious system which thus leaves room for the salvation of the penitent sinner by the sole efficacy of redeeming blood, whatever differences may exist in the detail of doctrines, or the forms of worship, may we not confidently look for the members of the family of Christ?

Where are these our brothers and sisters in Christ? Rather ask, where are they not? Already are they taking possession of the whole earth. The missionary of the cross has rivalled the daring explorer of unknown lands, in his efforts to extend this family circle over the whole world. He has rivalled the anxious and active trader, seeking to export the precious bread of life to the destitute of other regions; and now, already, are established branches of this family in numerous portions of the once heathen world. Yes, christian, you have brothers and sisters among the proud Chinese, the idolatrous Hindoos, the degraded Africans, the ferocious Sea-islanders. The Pagan has cast aside his idol,—the Mohommedan has forsworn his prophet,—the Jew has ceased to curse Jesus of Nazareth, and these have been united to the family of Christ. In enlightened and christian lands, multitudes may be found belonging to this family,—of all conditions, and of every age. The gospel has power over the high and the low—the learned and the ignorant. There are not wanting kings and princes, who bow in subjection to the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. In our own National Council, there has been for a long time, a small company of men, who find time, amid all their business, to meet together frequently for social prayer. Some of the most affluent of our land, have consecrated themselves and their property to God. Some of the most learned, have devoted their mental powers and their valuable acquisitions of knowledge to their Maker,—while multitudes of every variety of condition, the widows with their mites—the beggar with his sores, have the same claim of relationship. There are the aged, whose hoary heads are indeed a crown of glory; the mature, in their strength

and beauty; the young, just entering upon life's duties and cares; aye, and children too—mere babes, who have embraced Jesus as their Saviour,—all these we must greet as members of the family of Christ.

How numerous this family on earth may be, we cannot tell. Perhaps it always exceeds the ignorance and weak faith of the children of God. We are too apt to yield to despondency, like the prophet, when persecuted and terrified, he said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord of Hosts—for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away." This was the answer of God to the fainting Elijah,—“I have left me seven thousand in Israel, which have not bowed unto Baal.” Whatever the number may now be we have the assurance, that the time is hastening on, when “the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of God,” and when “all shall know the Lord from the least unto the greatest.”

Nor can we be sure that this is all. Who shall say that the power of Christ's redeeming love does not extend to other worlds around us? If sin hath also entered those bright abodes, who shall say that this world may not be to them, what Jerusalem is to us, the place of their Savior's death? May not this world be the Calvary of the universe, to which the eyes of multitudes of this family, in other worlds, are directed, as the theatre of Christ's suffering and death?

However this may be, it will be a large and glorious company, when all who are now at a distance, inhabiting different countries, and perhaps different worlds, shall be gathered into one place, even into the Paradise above; when the family on earth shall be joined to that in heaven, and henceforth and forever constitute one. Other families are broken up. Sometimes a prodigal son disturbs the peace of the whole household; or death enters, and takes away its members one by one, until naught is left but the remembrance of former joys. But this family shall have no such disturbances—no such separations. There at length in our Father's house, if we are christians, we shall join our elder brethren amid their glory, and there we shall be joined by all who hereafter, to the end of time, shall believe in Christ: then with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Peter, and John, and Paul, and Saints of lesser name, with our own kindred, who have been also the kindred of Christ,—and above all, with Christ Jesus himself to lead us to fountains of living waters, we shall spend eternity in the praise and service of the Most High. Then shall ascend the final song, from ten thousand times ten thousand voices, discordant on earth, but harmonious in heaven, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” And then, “every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them,” shall join in the chorus of the redeemed, “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever.”

My hearers, do you already belong to this family? Be not deceived. Have you the *evidence of love*? love to God, the Father—love to Christ, the Savior, and that love to the brethren by which you may know that you have passed from death unto life? Be not satisfied with the evidence of love for your own particular Church, or your own denomination. The only love, to which you may trust as a test of christian character, is a *love of Christians, as such*, wherever they may be, and under whatever circumstances. Have you *family love* for the children of God?—then may you suppose that you belong to this family. And will not this lead you to regard those among you as brethren?—to love them affectionately and fervently? Says our Savior to his disciples, in the fulness of his affection, "*As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.*" Is there any measure for the generous compassion, the self-denying love of Jesus towards his disciples—those for whom he has died, and for whom he rose from the dead? Can we measure the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love of Christ? It passeth knowledge. Yet here is a comparison, instituted by Jesus himself, "*As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.*" The depth and power of the tide of divine love which flows from the heart of the great Jehovah towards his eternal and equal Son—his only-begotten and well-beloved, is equalled by the current of affection which is ever gushing from the Savior's compassionate bosom towards his chosen ones. Now hear the command of the Savior for family love among his disciples; "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, *as I have loved you.*" The measure of the christian's love for every other christian, is to be the love of Christ for sinners—nay, it is to be measured by the love of Jehovah for his dear Son. As pure, as fervent, as self-denying, as controlling as the love of Christ for his children, and the love of God for Christ, must be the love of christians for each other. Will not the exercise of such love make them feel like members of the same family? Will it not lead them to be kind and compassionate and forbearing? to bear each others burdens, and to seek each others good? Remember, we are called to these duties, not merely that we may be useful to others, but that we may find evidence for ourselves that we really belong to Christ. If we have this requisite spirit shall we not be ready to greet a stranger with a brother's love, if only he comes to us with the name of christian? When our hearts cease to expand in warm affection towards those who bear the name of our blessed Redeemer, faith is dead within us, and hope should be. Let this common name in which we rejoice and trust, ever be dearer than any other. Let this sacred bond of union be cherished above every earthly tie, for these shall be severed, but that shall endure.

Have some of us, my hearers, no connection with this family? And yet all have an original title to this relationship. We are all the children of God. Alas, some of us who have wandered, have refused to return—some are alienated from God, and have become his enemies by wicked works. The proofs of such a condition are want of interest in

religion, and want of affection for the children of God. If there be nothing else against you—if there be no outbreking sin—no violence of passion, yet the want of this peculiar love is proof of disunion from the family of Christ. And can you remain thus separated from the people of God? The arms of Jesus Christ, and the bosom of the family of Christ are open to receive you. The Spirit and the bride say, Come. Resist not the pleadings of those who love your souls. Trifle not with the Spirit's influences—with the Savior's blood. Seek admission into the company of the faithful on earth, that you may share with them the blessedness of Heaven.

SERMON CCCLXII.

HOW OUGHT I TO KEEP THE SABBATH ?

Remember the Sabbath day.—Exodus 20.

“This is an interesting question. It intimately concerns every one who hopes finally to enjoy an everlasting rest in heaven. The character of a man depends very much upon the manner in which he observes the Sabbath. And so of a whole community. This institution was established by God himself, and was intended to exert a powerful and salutary influence not only upon individuals, but upon whole nations. Go to any place you please and scrutinize the habits and character of the people, and you may easily be satisfied whether they pay a proper respect to the fourth commandment.

The duties of the Sabbath are in many respects peculiar. They differ from the duties appropriate to other days. Many things which it would be right and proper to do at other times, God has forbidden me to do on the day which he calls his own. I must not labor on the Sabbath, that is, I must not engage in my ordinary worldly pursuits, though duty requires me to attend diligently to those on other days. The prohibition of the divine law does not end here. I am commanded to shut out worldly thoughts from my mind, and worldly feelings from my heart, and give myself up to the delightful services of religion.

I can now think of a great many things which I ought not to do on the Sabbath, but which I sometimes find in myself a strong disposition to indulge in. Some of these I shall mention.

I. I ought not to lie in bed later on Sabbath morning than on any other. The early hours of the day should be given to God. Their breath should be esteemed sweeter and more precious than that of any other morning in the week. The sluggard who loves his pillow and will not rise because his worldly business does not call him, shows that he has little regard for the delightful privileges which the Sabbath affords. He loses what can never be made up to him, though he may not be sensible of his loss. He unfits himself in a great measure for the sacred duties of the day. I must take care not to imitate him. The pleasures of protracted sleep in the morning are nothing in comparison with the richer and more rational enjoyments, which I find in

reading my Bible or meditating upon some serious subject. I wrong myself as well as sin against God, if I waste the "sweet hours" of Sabbath morning upon my bed. *I ought not to do it.*

II. I ought NOT to spend too much of the morning in dressing myself for church, and otherwise *preparing* for the religious duties of the day. I ought to be prepared to *commence* the Sabbath with the duties that appropriately belong to it. I must not prolong the previous week by adding to it any part of that day; *all* of which God has set apart for himself. It is very easy, and I am very apt to waste many a precious hour of this hallowed season in *unnecessary* attention to my person or matters which I ought not to allow to divert my mind from more important subjects.

III. I ought NOT, when on my way to the house of God, to talk or think upon subjects that have a tendency to unfit my mind for the services of the sanctuary. Worldly and distracting thoughts are sufficiently prone to steal my attention when listening to the preacher, though I make every effort to avoid them and have endeavored to shield my mind against them by previous prayer and meditation. But when I allow myself to think or converse upon topics inappropriate to the Sabbath until I enter the door of the church, I am sure to be harassed and disturbed by an uncomfortable train of reflections during the whole service. The thoughts which I have cherished and voluntarily taken with me to my seat, will not readily leave me to a calm and devout attention to the word of God. They are so obstinate and persevering in their solicitations that I sometimes know not what to do. I fight against them with all my strength, and still gain but a poor and partial victory.

There is hardly any thing in which I experience greater difficulty or find greater self-denial necessary than in regulating my conversation aright when going to the house of God. If I chance to be in company with a friend who is not pious, it may require a sacrifice of what the world deem politeness or sociability to refrain entirely from all conversation upon subjects of a worldly nature. The news of the past week are fresh in the memory, and nothing is more natural and common than to talk them over. It is exceedingly pleasant to exchange opinions on the current topics of the day; and one who should refuse to do it simply because it was the Sabbath, might be considered over strict and puritanical. Besides, this friend, especially if I do not see him often, may have a claim upon my particular attention, and Christian politeness requires that I should have a kind and affectionate regard for his feelings. I may know at the same time that serious conversation is not what he desires. He wishes to talk of the political movements or peculiar aspect of the times, or the manifold schemes of benevolence, or the rapid advancement of society. In such a case I must be careful not to manifest greater regard for his *present* feelings or gratification than for his *eternal* welfare. The high obligations of Christian faithfulness are upon me. I must discharge my duty to God, to him and to myself, at the same time. How can I do this, if my

conversation is wholly of a worldly nature, and in no respect different from what it would be likely to be on any other day of the week? I am persuaded *I ought not to be thinking or conversing upon worldly matters, when on my way to the house of God.*

IV. I ought not to engage in common amusements or recreation, when not at church. True I may be cheerful and ought to be so, and may relax my mind in pleasant and animated conversation, or in a great variety of other ways. But I must look well to the moral and religious tendency of every kind of relaxation in which I allow myself. A boundless field of *proper* and *allowable* pleasure lies before me. I may recount the scenes and incidents of my past life—call to mind the goodness and mercy of God in sustaining me and leading me safely through so many dangers, and in giving me so many privileges and so much happiness. I may look forward to the bright scenes and pure enjoyments of the heavenly world; and if my heart is right, may, as it were, enter upon them by anticipation. Such thoughts and contemplations are sweet and refreshing to those who love God, and shall they not be so to me? Shall they not make a part of my Sabbath-day recreation?

A Christian is hardly in danger of indulging in worldly amusements on the Sabbath, it would be so glaringly inconsistent both with his feelings and profession.

But the case of those who are not Christians, is very different. The temptation for them to indulge in what they perhaps may deem innocent diversions, is strong and besetting. They may find themselves engaged in them before they are aware. But let them take heed. They cannot plead exemption from any duties which are binding upon the Christian. Every act of theirs which would be wrong or criminal in a professor of religion, is wrong and criminal in them, and has a tendency to hinder them from becoming Christians. Worldly amusements on the Sabbath, however harmless they may appear, sweep away from the mind whatever of seriousness may have been occasioned by listening to the preacher—they dissipate the thoughts and drown reflection, and render the heart insensible to eternal things. They have been the instruments of perdition to millions;—I would not have them such to me. *I ought not then to indulge myself in them on the Sabbath.*

V. I ought not to read books on the Sabbath, that are not of a religious character or tendency. But why not? Because it would be as direct a violation of the fourth commandment as it would be to labor with my hands. The moral law of which the command, "to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy," is a part, has respect to the mind rather than the body. It is a law by which God governs the spirits of men, and may be transgressed in the stillness of private retirement as well as in the noise and bustle of a crowd in the streets. The reading of books which have not a religious tendency is often more unfavorable to *such a state of mind* as we should always cherish and maintain on the Sabbath, than almost any kind of bodily labor. It

shuts out serious thoughts, leaving no room for them in the mind. I have observed that many who would not on any account, be seen occupied on the Sabbath in what, they consider, worldly business, feel little or no compunction for perusing works of history, travels, science, literature, and so forth, which have no connexion with religion. They regard this as a proper manner of spending the hours that are not occupied in public worship. Reading is not their every day employment; and, on this account hardly seems to be a worldly business. Besides, they disturb no one—all is done in the stillness of solitude, and their example they think, is not so pernicious to the interests of society, as that of the man who attends to his ordinary pursuits on the Sabbath. But are their reasons sufficient to justify the practice in question? Is the reading of books which are not of a religious character or tendency in any way more nearly allied to the appropriate duties of the day which the Author of all our blessings requires us to keep holy, than any other employment that does not interrupt the quiet or devotion of others? Might not the merchant post his books, or the cashier prepare his bank bills for circulation, or the mechanic work in his shop, or the farmer in his barn, as well as one who is fond of reading, peruse such books as I have referred to in the parlor, or his chamber? I have often thought upon this subject, and am fully convinced that *I ought not to spend the Sabbath in reading books, that have no particular tendency to inspire me with such sentiments and feelings, as the whole spirit of its original design and institution requires of those who would properly observe it and profit by it.*

IV. I ought *not* to form plans or make arrangements on the Sabbath for the business of the week. This I find myself at times quite too much disposed to do. When I expect to engage in any new undertaking, or take a journey, or receive a visit from particular friends in the course of the week, it requires an effort to keep all thoughts of these things out of my mind. They rush upon me unexpectedly and not unfrequently trouble me exceedingly,—for I feel all the time that I ought not to indulge them. They have no right to my attention during the hours God has set apart for his especial service. They may sometimes cost me a painful struggle, but *I must not allow them a place in my mind, if I would have a pure conscience.*

VII. I ought *not* to neglect private religious duties on the Sabbath, because I am occupied so much of the time in public worship. I ought to be even more fervent in my supplications and spend a longer time in my closet than is, on other days, usual. I must strive to live very near to God, and then will the Sabbath shed a sanctifying radiance over every other day of the week.

I ought *not* to allow the Sabbath to be to me a dull, uninteresting day. It should be the happiest and most delightful day of the seven. It was intended by its Author to be a joyful season, in which the heart should overflow with gratitude and holy joy, and exult in rapturous anticipation of an endless Sabbath in heaven. It brings along with it a train of most interesting and grateful recollections. It carries the

thoughts back to that eventful morning when some pious women and two of the disciples went early to the Sepulchre, and found that Jesus was not there. He had risen, as he had told them—death had not power to hold him. On the Sabbath he met his disciples and by the gracious words he spoke, filled them with joy, revealing himself as a triumphant Redeemer who had achieved the great work of man's Salvation. On the Sabbath too, he rode on a bright cloud to heaven, leaving to his disciples the sustaining assurance that he would be with them, to the end of the world. On the Sabbath, the Holy Spirit came down and converted in a single day more than three thousand souls. Every thing connected with the history of the Sabbath is adapted to awaken the most pleasing emotions, and to render its return delightful. *It ought not then to be to me a tiresome or uninteresting season.*

The Sabbath is exactly adapted to my wants—it is a boon which I would not exchange for all the treasures emboweled in the earth—it was given me in order that, by a proper improvement of its privileges, I might be prepared for the hidden joys and glory of an endless Sabbath in heaven. In future, I hope to make more of the Sabbath, and keep it as I shall wish I had done, when I exchange its privileges and employments for those of an unchanging state in the coming world."